DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 138 587 SP 011 016

AUTHOR James, Richard
TITLE Multicultural Issues in Standards for Teacher Education.
PUB DATE 3 Mar 77
NOTE 13p.; Presented at the Annual Meeting, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Chicago, Illinois, March 1-4, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; *Accreditation (Institutions); Cross Cultural Training; *Cultural Pluralism; *Educational Responsibility; Educational Trends; *Teacher Education; *Teachers Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Accreditation Standards

ABSTRACT

In this presentation, the author considers the question of whether multicultural education considerations should be included in the standards used by agencies responsible for the accreditation of teacher education programs. The terms "accreditation" and "multicultural education" are defined and discussed and related to the stated goals of the accreditation process and to the process of education in general. It is concluded that teachers must be able to understand, interpret, and utilize the cross-cultural dynamic found in every classroom so that each child is free to develop his or her skills as far as individual potential permits. Assuming that multicultural education is thus an issue in accreditation standards, the author investigates the means of including it. Three recommendations he sees evolving from present discussion on standards are: (1) multiculturalism should permeate the standards rather than be confined to a single standard; (2) the language regarding multicultural considerations should be as broad and general as the language of the other standards; and (3) supplementary documents should be prepared for recommendations regarding multicultural standards, in order to support and facilitate the development of specific elements in multicultural programs. (MB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED138587

Multicultural Issues in Standards for Teacher Education

Richard James
Dean
Teacher Education
Morgan State University

Presented at AACTE Annual Meeting, Chicago, March 3, 1977

SP 011 016

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Multicultural Issues in Standards for Teacher Education

Richard ~~Jones~~ James

Ladies and Gentlemen. Let me begin my remarks by assuring you that I am quite sensitive to the difficulty of the task that has been set for me. That sensitivity results from considerable experience in meetings where multicultural education or accreditation were discussed often with a high degree of passion and emotionalism: Accreditation because it pertains to the credibility and legitimacy of the institution where we work; Multicultural education because it forces us to confront ourselves in terms of our feelings and attitudes toward other human beings. Our emotionalism, however, is not sufficient justification to avoid the hard questions about both issues. As you well know, accreditation in teacher education is being received with increasing skepticism and doubt by many in the field. These annual meeting sessions are a reflection of concern about the future of accreditation and the agency that is responsible for carrying it out. Multicultural education, on the other hand, is assuming increasing importance as the pluralistic nature of our society is more generally recognized and accepted.

For several years now, teacher educators have been engaged in a more or less continuing dialogue on the relationship between multicultural education, accreditation, and certification. Some states and school districts have adopted regulations that require candidates for certification to present evidence that they have had some preparation designed to develop competencies in addressing the educational needs and interests of culturally diverse groups. Colleges and universities in various parts of the nation have developed "multicultural" components in their teacher education programs. In some instances complete programs have been developed to prepare "multicultural specialists." Admittedly much of this

activity is stimulated by the support provided by Federal funds in an attempt to obtain compliance with recently passed legislation in the area of human rights. I am becoming convinced, however, that we are witnessing a widespread and growing awareness that the nation's educational establishment needs to undergo significant change if the needs of all of our citizens are to be more efficiently met. I do not find it surprising therefore, that we are here to consider the question of whether multicultural education considerations should be included in the standards used by the agency that is responsible for the accreditation of teacher education programs.

Before we can address this question, I believe that some common ground needs to be established through the definition of some of the principal concepts being discussed. First, let's take accreditation. The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines the word accredit in the following manner: "To certify as meeting all formal official requirements of academic excellence, curriculum, facilities, etc.; to make authoritative, creditable or reputable; to sanction." (1) Accreditation thus may be presumed to be the act of applying these qualities to a school or college or educational program and so on. It would appear that there is general agreement on this definition.

There is, as I'm sure most of you know, no firm consensus on the meaning of the term multicultural education. For the definition that I will use here, I owe a debt of appreciation to Margaret Alison Gibson who, in a recent article in the Anthropology and Education Quarterly, defines multicultural education as "the process whereby a person develops competencies in multiple systems of standards for perceiving, evaluating, believing and doing."(2) Let me read that again. "The process

whereby a person develops competencies in multiple systems of standards for perceiving, evaluating, believing and doing." If one accepts Gibson's definition, it becomes clear that multicultural education need not be associated exclusively with the education of racial and ethnic minorities. It also becomes clear that the recipient of multicultural education, presumably, is prepared to function in more than one cultural setting and that the setting may be determined by social class, religion, profession and so on. Such an education, in my view is particularly fitting to a nation whose population, for the most part came here from other parts of the world. Multicultural education, as defined by Gibson, would enable us to move away from the stereotyping of students according to their racial and ethnic group identity. It would encourage the exploration of similarities as well as differences within and among groups thus affording more opportunities for individuals to explore the rich spectrum of cultural alternatives that is the essence of this society.

Before getting on with the question of multicultural education factors in accreditation standards, it also seems appropriate to say a few words on the nature of education in a democratic, pluralistic society. After all, it is the purpose of education and the achievement of that purpose that gives meaning to our work. John Dewey wrote that "all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race." I assume that he speaks of the human race. To continue, Dewey wrote that "this process begins unconsciously, almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions. Through this unconscious education, the individual gradually comes to share in the

intellectual and moral resources that humanity has succeeded in getting together. He becomes an inheritor of the funded capital of civilization."(3) Dewey writes that "the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race and to use his own powers for social ends." Education, stated Dewey "is a process of living and not a preparation for future living."(4) If Dewey is right, it seems reasonable to ask the question: What are the inherited resources in which our children and youth should share? What is the funded capital of civilization? Is Dewey talking about the inherited resources of Western European culture only? Is he speaking of the funded capital of Anglo-Saxon civilization? More often than not, our schools are operated on the assumption that the answer to these questions is yes.

Let's turn once more to the question of multicultural education and accreditation standards for teacher education. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education lists four purposes of accreditation in teacher education. And they are:

1) To assure the public that particular institutions offer programs for the preparation of teachers and other professional school personnel that meet national standards of quality.

2) To ensure that children and youth are served by well-prepared personnel.

3) To advance the teaching profession through the improvement of preparation programs. And

4) To provide a basis for reciprocity among states in certifying school personnel. (5)

Assuming as a basis for this discussion that these purposes are valid, there would appear to be reason for examining the question of multicultural education and its relationship to the process of accreditation. What, for example, are national standards of quality? Does this term imply standards that are applied without regard to the social context in which institutions exist and conduct their teacher preparation programs? Are national standards of quality formulated to lead to the preparation of personnel who can effectively address the needs of all children and youth or just some of them? In purpose number two we find the reference to well-prepared school personnel. Well prepared to do what? To perpetuate the racial, ethnic, religious and sex stereotyping that is still too common in our society? Or to marshall the forces of the educational establishment in the interest of accelerating the move toward a society that is truly multicultural? I like to hope that the framers of these purposes had the latter meaning in mind. What about the question of reciprocity as it pertains to certification? A number of states already require experiences of a multicultural nature as a prerequisite for certification. Can the national accrediting agency continue to disregard this factor as it sanctions institutional preparation programs? I think not.

There appears to be little argument with the premise that teacher education institutions must do something about multicultural education. The AACTE's Bicentennial Commission on Education for the Profession of Teaching spoke out very clearly on this matter when it stated that "teacher educators must maintain a profound commitment to human rights, particularly the rights of children." The Commission went on to recognize that "unfortunately, teacher educators have not always been conscious exemplars of human rights. Few actively advocate the rights

of minority groups or promote cultural pluralism. Today, leaders ask the education profession to develop in students those attitudes and beliefs which support cultural pluralism as a positive social force. Thus, the education of teacher educators must be substantive enough to develop a respect for the culture, life styles and contributions of non-mainstream cultures."(6) The Commission goes further by saying that "teacher educators, as advocates, must respond to move the concepts in No One Model American, the AACTE's statement on multicultural education, from thought to action in all aspects of professional preparation and the organizations that represent the teaching profession." Notice that the Commission says must respond. Those are not my words. If the Commission is right can there be well-prepared school personnel without this commitment to multicultural education? Can this important aspect of teacher preparation be ignored in national standards of quality?

There are those who say that the concept of multicultural education has no place in accreditation standards. As I understand this point of view, it is that generalized preparation on a national basis should be NCATE's sole concern. I assume that this point of view is based on the assumption that the standards are neutral and provide a means for objectively dentifying indices of quality. This assumption, as far as I know, is not supported by evidence. Further, one could hardly describe the process used to apply the standards as neutral. Both the standards and the process are of necessity culture bound. One would have to be quite naive to believe otherwise. While the school districts where our graduates are employed do have many common characteristics they also serve diverse communities with specific instructional needs. Well prepared school personnel must be able to function effectively in a

particular school setting while at the same time exhibiting the skills and competencies expected by the profession. As Gibson's definition of multicultural education implies, well prepared school personnel must possess competencies in multiple systems for perceiving, evaluating, believing and doing. When this issue is addressed, we will have made a sound beginning toward closing the gap between generalized, national teacher preparation and the particular instructional needs of school districts that graduates of our programs must be prepared to face. In fact the assumption that national, generalized teacher education programs prepare students to teach in any setting is questionable, to say the least.

To explore this idea a bit more, I'd like to refer you to a statement of Asa Hilliard, who reminds us that "the teaching process is always a cross-cultural encounter." He goes on to say that "teachers are representatives of a particular configuration of subcultures. Age, socio-economic status, geographical background, education and belief systems are examples of sources of a teacher's cultural configuration. It is out of this unique cultural configuration that the teacher notices variations among students and frames questions, develops expectations and plans action." Hilliard goes on to remind us that "each student brings a unique configuration as a basis for perceiving and responding. Therefore, when a teacher and a student meet each other to deal with learning tasks, it is not simply a matter of academic content which must be handled. In fact, the very selection of content to be considered, and the way in which that content is to be considered, and the use to which that content is to be put are all influenced by what teacher and student bring to the context."(7) If one accepts Hilliard's point of view, and I believe that it would be difficult not to do so,

it becomes extremely important that teachers be able to understand, interpret and utilize the cross-cultural dynamic that is to be found in every classroom. How else can we establish a learning environment where every child is free to develop his or her skills and competencies as far as their individual potential will permit?

If we assume that it is appropriate to address the issue of multicultural education in accreditation standards, we then face the question of how to do it. Is it best accomplished through a single standard? Should multiculturalism permeate all of the standards? What language is needed to address the issue adequately? These questions have been a principal concern of the National Committee on Standards for Multicultural Teacher Education which I am privileged to chair. I am informed that these and other questions were also principal items of concern expressed in the recently concluded series of mini-sessions sponsored by the AACTE through the National Committee. The final recommendations of the Committee, which will go to the AACTE Select Committee on NCATE standards are not yet determined. The result of data and information obtained from the mini-sessions, from this session and from a survey of the AACTE membership will be reviewed and analyzed in the process of arriving at the Committee's recommendations. My own guess, and I may be wrong, would be along these lines:

1) The Committee will probably conclude that multiculturalism should permeate the standards rather than be confined to a single standard.

2) The language regarding multicultural considerations will, in most instances, be as broad and general as the language of the other standards.

However, emphasis will be placed on the importance of evidence of Multicultural commitment and action.

3) The committee is sensitive to the need to provide support and assistance to those institutions which are developing the specific elements of multicultural programs and will provide some direction in documents that are supplementary to its recommendations regarding the standards.

It is certainly reasonable for you to ask what might be some of the specifics regarding multicultural considerations in the standards. I believe that specific ideas and recommendations are in abundance. Finding them requires interest and commitment. The previously mentioned Report of the AACTE Bicentennial Commission contains a number of examples. Let me, for the sake of this discussion, point out a few. The Commission recommends "that teacher education programs provide students with conceptual structures concerning teaching and learning which cut across ethnic and community boundaries. Also, that all teacher education students study and experience in some depth at least one of the local, regional or national subcultures."(8) In another section of its report this Commission speaks to another specific — recruitment. "Recruitment for teacher education must reach a widely differentiated population base. The Commission cautions against the job market being the rationale for which diversity is denied. The profession must be conscious of the need to insure diversity as well as the need to influence directly the quality of personnel."(9) In yet another part of this report we find the statement that "colleges of education have a special obligation to set an example for other colleges

by aggresively seeking and hiring faculty from minority groups and providing educational access to students from minority groups. A multiracial, multicultural faculty and student body is essential if multicultural education is to become a reality rather than just a concept."(10) These examples, as you probably have noted, cut across most areas addressed by the standards. They are no more vague and ambiguous than the language of the standards themselves. My point here is to suggest that those who demand spcificity with regard to multicultural education are not being quite fair. Such specificity is not characteristic of many concepts in teacher education. Some of these ambiguous concepts are already in the standards and are accepted without question. In my view, the strict application of these criterion of specificity to multicultural education suggests a double standard. Certainly there is a need for more clarification of the concept of multicultural education but I would suggest that we already know enough about it to be aware of its urgency to the continued growth and enrichment of our society.

Ideally, there would be no need for multicultural education to be discussed as a needed element in accreditation standards. Education, itself, is an inherently multicultural experience. It will continue to be so no matter what we do. I, for one, an convinced, however, that if we recognize the educational process as inherently multicultural and conduct our programs accordingly the impact on this society will be immense. It is true that schools can't solve all of the nation's social ills, but we can help to reach that day when the children and youth we serve as well as the nation at large will perceive us as a part of the solutions instead of the problems

Thank you very much.

Footnotes

1. The Randon House Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged Edition, Jess Stein, Editor, New York: Random House, Inc., 1971, p. 10.

2. Gibson, Margaret Alison. "Approaches to Multicultural Education in the United States: Some Concepts and Assumptions," Anthropology and Education Quarterly, Vol. VII, No. 4. (November, 1976), p. 15.

3. Dewey, John. "My Pedagogic Creed," Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom, Second Edition, Enlarged, Robert Ulich, Editor. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954, p 629.

4. Ibid, p 631.

5. Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Washington, D.C.: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1970, n.p.

6. Howsam Robert B. et.al. Educating a Profession, Report of the Bicentennial Commission on Education for the Profession of Teaching of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.: The Association, 1976, p. 109 .

7. Hilliard, Asa G., "Restructuring Teacher Education for Multicultural Imperatives." Multicultural Education Through Competency — Based Teacher Education. Washington, D.C.: AACTE 1974.

8. Howsam, et.al., op. cit , p. 97.

9. Ibid, p. 115.

10. Ibid, p. 109.